

# Excerpts From Soviet Statements on BMD

---

The Soviet reaction to President Reagan's March 23, 1983, speech was prompt and strongly negative. Four days after the speech was given, the Soviet President, Yuri Andropov, denounced President Reagan's proposal to develop new types of BMD systems, Andropov said the idea of defensive measures might seem attractive to the uninformed, but:

In fact, the strategic offensive forces of the United States will continue to be developed and upgraded at full tilt and along quite a definite line at that, namely that of acquiring a nuclear first strike capability. Under these conditions, the intention to secure itself the possibility of destroying, with the help of the ABM defenses, the corresponding strategic systems of the other side, that is, of rendering it unable to deal a retaliatory strike, is a bid to disarm the Soviet Union in the face of the U.S. nuclear threat. . . . [It] is only mutual restraint in the field of ABM defenses that will allow progress in limiting and reducing offensive weapons, that is in checking and reversing the strategic arms race as a whole. Today, however, the United States intends to sever this interconnection. Should this conception be converted into reality, this would actually open the floodgates of a runaway race of all types of strategic arms, both offensive and defensive. Such is the real purport, the seamy side, so to say, of Washington's "defensive conception."<sup>\*</sup>

These themes have been reiterated vigorously and persistently ever since by Soviet newspaper commentators, scientists, diplomats, and senior officials.

In an interview with *U.S. News and World Report* in April 1984, the Director of the Soviet Institute of Space Research, Roald Sagdeyev, commented on the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative as follows:

We have made a detailed analysis. We believe that even if it would be possible to build such a system—a very expensive system—it would not prove to be an absolute shield. Its penetrability would remain quite high.

It will always be possible—and at a lower cost—to interfere with such a system or to foil it by increasing the number of attacking weapons,

A space-based defense system would prove to be extraordinarily destabilizing. When those who command such a system understand that it does not provide 100 percent protection, they might be seduced by the idea of attempting a first strike,

Our conclusion is quite pessimistic; It will lead to a new round in the arms race and will increase the emphasis on developing first-strike weapons.<sup>2</sup>

Following are excerpts from an article by another prominent Soviet scientist, Yevgeny P. Velikhov, a vice-president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences:

. . . [The deployment of a BMD system] would significantly complicate the maintenance of deterrence, making it highly unstable, for it would stimulate the illusion of advantages (damage limitation and even a chance for surviving nuclear war) associated with a first strike. . . . [I]f both sides possessed space-based [BMD] systems the destabilizing effect would be much greater than if such systems were available to only one side. In the context of strategic logic (without considering psychological and political aspects) this thinking arises from the fact that if both sides had these systems, their impetus for a preemptive first strike would be greater, since each side could hope to secure an advantage by striking first.

. . . The development of [space-based anti-missile systems] could stimulate an increase in the arsenals of strategic delivery vehicles and nuclear warheads, for example, strategic cruise missiles, including sea- and ground-launched cruise missiles . . . . If tests of the space-based systems were to begin, to say nothing of their actual deployment, the permanent ABM Treaty, signed on May 26, 1972, would be threatened. . . . It is hard to overestimate the importance of this U.S.-Soviet Treaty today for it remains the only ratified and acting agreement in the area of strategic arms limitation, . . .

Abrogation of the ABM Treaty would in turn undoubtedly lessen chances for reaching mutually beneficial strategic arms limitation and reduction agreements in the near future. The stabilizing regime created by the 1972 ABM Treaty could be strengthened significantly by agreements on the non-deployment in space of any weapons and the non-use of force in space.  
\*\*\*

[Space-based BMD systems] would inevitably become a serious obstacle for U.S.-Soviet cooperation in the peaceful uses of space. Yet the potential value of such cooperation is important from economic, scientific and technological points of view, because of the many mutually complementary characteristics of the Soviet and U.S. space programs. Cooperation in this area could be a very positive factor, politically and psychologically, in improving U.S.-Soviet relations in general, and in

<sup>1</sup>From *Pravda*, Mar. 27, 1983.

<sup>2</sup>*U. S. News and World Report*, Apr. 23, 1984, p. 50.

strengthening the confidence between the peoples and the leaders of the two great powers.

The potential impact of a large-scale space-based anti-missile program on the strategic balance would be to substantially increase both the risk of a preemptive strike and the likelihood of wrong and fatal decisions in crises. Hence even if rough parity in strategic forces were preserved, strategic stability would be seriously undermined.<sup>3</sup>

In August 1983 the Soviet Union formally proposed at the United Nations General Assembly a revised draft treaty on "The Prohibition of the Use of Force in Outer Space and From Space Against the Earth."<sup>4</sup> The provisions of this draft would ban space-based weapons, anti-satellite systems, and military use of manned spacecraft.

Former Soviet President Konstantin Chernenko issued several statements on ballistic missile defense. Following are illustrative excerpts:

We are resolutely against the development of broad-scale antimissile defense systems, which cannot be viewed in any other way than as aimed at the unpunished perpetration of nuclear aggression. There is an indefinite Soviet-American treaty on antimissile defense, prohibiting the creation of such systems. It must be rigorously observed.<sup>5</sup>

Today, no limitation and, all the more, no reduction of nuclear arms can be attained without effective measures that would prevent the militarization of outer space. . . . Using the term "defense" is juggling with words. In its substance, this is an . . . aggressive concept. The aim is to try to disarm the other side and deprive it of a capability to retaliate in the event of nuclear aggression against it.

To put it simply, the aim is to acquire a capability to deliver a nuclear strike, counting on impunity with an anti-ballistic missile shield to protect oneself from retaliation. . . . [U.S. BMD deployment not only would mean] the end of the process of nuclear arms limitation and reduction, but [it] would become a catalyst of an uncontrolled arms race in all fields.<sup>6</sup>

In a lengthy interview on Moscow television January 13, 1985, then Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko discussed the results of his January 7-8 meeting with Secretary of State George Shultz. The following excerpts refer to space weapons:

. . . [It] is impossible to examine either the question of strategic armaments or the question of intermediate-range nuclear weapons without ex-

amining the question of . . . averting an arms race in space. In the end the American side agreed to adopt such a viewpoint. This fact is a positive one.

. . . [Preventing "militarization of space" means] arms intended for use against targets in space should be banned categorically and also that arms intended for use from space against. . . targets on the ground, in the sea and in the air should be banned categorically.

\*\*\*

[If] accords [on preventing militarization of space] became clear, then it would be possible to move forward also on questions of strategic armaments. The Soviet Union would be willing not only to examine this problem of strategic armaments but would also be willing to reduce them sharply. . . . And on the contrary, if there were no movement forward in space questions, then it would be superfluous even to speak about the possibility of a reduction in strategic armaments.

\*\*\*

We are told this: After all, the United States does not have the intention of striking a blow at the Soviet Union. We tell them: Well, then, it follows that the Soviet Union must rely on your conscience, on the conscience of Washington. Well, first of all, we are not very convinced that Washington has very great reserves of this merchandise. . . . And second, if we were to mentally trade places with you, . . . if we were trying to create such a system, corresponding statements, statements to the effect that: You should rely on our conscience. Would they be sufficient for you? Silence. Silence.

\*\*\*

[The] chief barrier that separates the policy of the Soviet Union from that of the United States is atomic weapons. . . . [Reaching agreement at the Geneva negotiations] would therefore undoubtedly denote a big step forward in matters relating to improving bilateral Soviet- U.S. relations, especially if one takes account of the fact that both sides are major powers with broad-ranging international interests.

The June 4, 1985, issue of *Pravda* contained a long article on the ABM Treaty by Marshal Sergei F. Akhromeyev, Chief of the Soviet General Staff. Excerpts follow:

The limitation, still more the reduction, of nuclear arms is inconceivable in conditions of the militarization of space. The creation and deployment in space of strike arms will inevitably lead to an increase in the quantity of, and to the qualitative improvement of, strategic nuclear arms. . . . The creation of the large-scale space ABM system contemplated in the United States has a clear aggressive point: This system is a most important element in the integrated offensive potential of the

<sup>3</sup>Yevgeny P. Velikhov, "Effect on Strategic Stability," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 1984.

<sup>4</sup>U. N. General Assembly Document No. A/38/194

<sup>5</sup>TASS, Dec 20, 1984.

<sup>6</sup>Chernenko Again Warns U.S. on Space Plan, *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1985, p. 3.

side that has created it, undermines strategic equilibrium, and provides the opportunity for the United States to deliver a first strike in the hope that the retaliatory strike against U.S. territory can be averted.

How is the other side, the Soviet Union, supposed to behave under these conditions? It is left with no choice; it will be forced to ensure the restoration of the strategic balance and to build up its own strategic offensive forces, supplementing them with means of defense. Therefore, any attempts to limit strategic offensive armaments while creating space strike means are futile.

The military-political significance of the Soviet-U.S. ABM Treaty is extremely great. This treaty is one of the foundations on which relations between the sides are based. By signing it the Soviet Union and the United States recognized that in the nuclear age only mutual restraint in the sphere of ABM systems will make it possible to advance along the path of limiting and reducing nuclear arms, that is, to curb the strategic arms race as a whole,

... If the [ABM Treaty] were to lapse for any reason, the foundation on which talks between the sides on nuclear arms limitation could be based and conducted would disappear. This would effectively mean the collapse of talks and an uncontrolled arms race for decades.

... The U.S. Administration's actions in creating a new class of weapons—space strike means—are incompatible with the principles forming the foundation of the ABM Treaty. By proclaiming the "Strategic Defense Initiative" and embarking on the practical implementation of a large-scale anti-ballistic missile system with space-based elements, Washington is effectively working directly to undermine the treaty.

\*\*\*

[U.S. leaders] are saying that the U.S. actions running counter to the treaty can somehow be legitimized, for instance, by revising this document and making amendments to it agreed with the Soviet side. . . .

All this is merely an unworthy ploy aimed at reassuring public opinion. . . . The United States is working toward changing the meaning of the Treaty itself and emasculating it of its main content—the ban on the deployment of an ABM defense of the country's territory.

The Soviet Union, of course, will not countenance the Treaty on the Limitation of ABM Systems being transformed into a cover for U.S. policy aimed at ensuring an arms race in the sphere of space anti-ballistic missile systems.

... If space strike arms are banned, and preparations for their creation are halted at the stage of scientific research work, broad opportunities will be opened up for a radical reduction of nuclear

arms. The Soviet Union has already proposed a reduction of strategic offensive arms by one-fourth. Given the non-militarization of space, it is possible to carry out even more profound reductions. . . . For its part, the Soviet Union will persistently seek in Geneva specific, mutually acceptable agreements that would make it possible to put an end to the arms race and carry forward the cause of disarmament.

In a speech<sup>7</sup> in May 1985, Soviet General Chairman Mikhail S. Gorbachev said:

There are no people in the world who are not worried by the U.S. plans to militarize space. This worry is well grounded. Let us take a realistic view of matters: the implementation of these plans would thwart disarmament talks.

Moreover, it would dramatically increase the threat of a truly global, all-destroying military conflict. Anyone capable of an unbiased analysis of the situation and sincerely wishing to safeguard peace cannot help opposing "star wars."

In a nationally televised speech June 26, 1985, Chairman Gorbachev said:

We are prepared to seek accord not only about ending the arms race, but about the greatest of arms reductions—right up to general and complete disarmament. At present, as you know, we are holding talks with the United States in Geneva. The task before them, as the Soviet leadership understands it, is to end the arms race on earth and prevent one in space. We embarked upon the negotiations in order to achieve these aims in practice. But all the indications are that this is precisely what the U.S. Administration, and the military-industrial complex which it serves, do not want. The attainment of serious accords evidently does not enter into their plans. They are continuing to implement their gigantic program of forcing through the production of more and more new types of weapons of mass destruction in the hope of achieving superiority over the countries of socialism, and dictating their will to them. The Americans have not only failed to put forward any serious proposals in Geneva for curtailing the arms race, but on the contrary, are taking steps that make such a curtailment impossible. I am thinking of the so-called "star wars" program to create offensive space weapons. Talk of its supposed defensive nature is, of course, a fairy tale for the gullible. The idea is to attempt to paralyze the Soviet Union's strategic arms and guarantee the opportunity of an unpunished nuclear strike against our country.

This is the essence of the matter, and one which we cannot fail to take into account. If the Soviet Union is faced with a real threat from space, it will find a way to effectively counter it. Let no one, and

<sup>7</sup>TASS, May 27, 1985.

I say this quite definitely, doubt this. For the time being, one thing is clear—that is, that the American program for the militarization of space plays the role of a blank wall, barring the way to the achievement in Geneva of the relevant accords.

By its militarist policy the U.S. Administration is assuming a grave responsibility to mankind. If our partners at the Geneva talks continue with their line of playing for time at the meetings of the delegations, avoiding a solution of the questions for which they have assembled and using this time to push ahead with their military programs in space, on the ground, and at sea, we shall then of course have to assess the whole situation anew. We simply cannot allow the talks to be used again to divert attention and to cover up military preparations, whose purpose is to secure U.S. strategic superiority and achieve world dominance. In rebuffing these schemes, I am confident that we will be supported by the really peace-loving forces throughout the whole world and that we will be supported by the Soviet people.

In a letter sent July 5, 1985, to American scientists, Chairman Gorbachev said:

... on behalf of the Soviet leadership I want to state in all definiteness that the Soviet Union will not be the first to make a step into outer space with weapons. We shall make every effort to convince other countries, and above all the United States of America, not to make such a fatal step which would inevitably increase the threat of nuclear war and would give an impetus to the uncontrolled arms race in all directions.

Proceeding from this goal, the Soviet Union, as you evidently know, has made a radical proposal in the United Nations organization, tabling a draft treaty on the prohibition of the use of force in space and from space against earth. If the United States joined the vast majority of states that have supported this initiative, the issue of space weapons could be closed once and for all.

At the Soviet-American talks on nuclear and space arms in Geneva we are seeking to come to terms on a full ban on the development, testing,

and deployment of space attack systems. Such a ban would make it possible not only to preserve outer space for peaceful development, research, and scientific discoveries, but also to launch the process of sharply reducing, then eliminating nuclear weapons.

We have also repeatedly taken unilateral steps which have been called upon to set a good example to the United States. It is for two years now that the Soviet Union has maintained its moratorium on the placement of anti-satellite weapons in outer space, and it will continue abiding by it for as long as the other states will be acting in the same way. Lying on the table in Washington is our proposal for both sides to put a total end to efforts to develop new anti-satellite systems and for such systems already possessed by the U.S.S.R. and the United States, including those whose testing has not yet been completed, to be scrapped. The actions of the American side will show already in the near future which decision the U.S. Administration will prefer.

Strategic stability and trust would, no doubt, be strengthened if the United States agreed together with the U.S.S.R. in a binding form to reaffirm commitment to the regime of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, a treaty of unlimited duration.

The Soviet Union is not developing attack space weapons or a large-scale ABM system, just as it is not laying the foundation for such a defense. It strictly adheres to its obligations under the treaty as a whole and, in its particular aspects, unswervingly observes the spirit and the letter of that document of paramount importance. We invite the American leadership to join us in that undertaking, [and] renounce the plans of space militarization that are now in the making, plans which would invariably lead to the breakup of that document—the key link of the entire process of nuclear arms limitations.

The U.S.S.R. proceeds from the premise that the practical fulfillment of the task of preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on earth is possible given the political will and sincere desire of both sides to work toward attaining that historic goal. The Soviet Union has such a desire and such a will. . . .

“Outer Space Should Serve Peace,” article giving text of Mikhail Gorbachev’s reply to a message from the Union of Concerned Scientists, TASS, July 5, 1985.